

## The Indian Freedom Family

- A.S. Panesar

**'You can fool some of the people all the time-- you can fool all the people part of the time, but you can not fool all the people all the time'.** The above lines were expressed in a book 'Why India is in Revolt against the British Rule' published in London in 1916 by the Indian National Party. The First World War had by the time, completed two years and the world was yet to witness another three years in the dreadful war. The book further commented **'She (England) has light-heartedly entered into this worldwar to capture the German trade; Her great Statesman, Lord Curzon, whose only qualification of being great (is) that as Viceroy of India, he ruled the country with blood and sword, assured England that it would be an easy job'**. This was also the time, when in the subjugated India, some of her greatest leaders, were pushing Indians into the war of Europe, 'out of all context'. It is said that the pushing of Indians by their leaders into the war effort was in the hope that the British imperialists would offer them at least 'limited autonomy' in return. It was in 1919, after the infamous Jallianwala Bagh tragedy, that the newly found romance of Indian leaders with British imperialism during the First World War came to an end in some way. The understanding of their leaders proved to be a failure. But way back in 1916, already the voices expressing distrust for the imperialism had been raised, as we find in the above-quoted book. Still then, the Indian voices raised in London did not find resonance amongst the leaders in India. It is thus, pertinent to ask following questions:

- Were the voices of dissent and understanding of the true nature of imperialism, possible only in the Western hemisphere through the lens of Western philosophical ideas? (As a matter of fact, Mohandas Gandhi's apprenticeship in South Africa was responsible for his image as mass leader in India).
- Weren't there any Indians or Indian leaders who could show some mark of maturity and state diplomacy, while working wholly from India on the lines of Indic philosophy?

This is relevant since earlier research pointed to the knowledge of English language as an important reason and the driving force behind welfare work and general awakening. The present article aims to look at historical evidence with respect to 'political understanding and maturity' of Indian leaders. It aims to discover the qualities, characters and consequences of political course undertaken by Indian leaders. Indians finally achieved independence when they worked as a unit, as a family!- when selfless sacrifice outweighed selfish interests. {Due to brevity of writing space, facts are presented in concise form, for which, however, exhaustive scholarly evidence is available}.

Who were the difference members of this great Indian family, so diverse in culture, vast in numbers, yet subjugated by a bunch of guests! Who were the members in this great Indian family, that conspired with the guests that had come for trade, to establish their rule in a foreign land? When, once subjugated, when did a true Indian uprising take place? Was it only to be seen in the pamphlets of *Ghadar* party or as in the above, Indian National Party, who had a presence in the West, or was there also, any ***indigenous understanding*** equivalent to, or may be superior than, the understanding displayed by Indians who had been influenced by Western developments. **The question is how mature were Indian leaders in terms of their understanding, diplomacy, pragmatism and hence, in their contribution for Indian Independence?**

### **The First armed rebellion:**

The first armed rebellion on mass scale against the British Empire was fought in 1857. But this was not a people's movement. It was a campaign by discontented Indian princes and elites whose authority had been challenged by the rapidly expanding (East India) Company Empire. It is also referred to as the *Sepoy Mutiny*. The *Sepoy Mutiny* was triggered by the Indian soldiers working for the British East India Company on the issue of nature of grease used in Enfield rifle cartridges, which had religious implications. But a greater part of the Mutiny was caused by disproportionate army rules and wages, discriminating Indians from Britishers. Along with this, there were other caste-based issues. Hence, petty personal- and promotion-based issues were dominant. Nana Sahib, an important figure in the revolt, was fighting as he was denied pension by East India Company. Rani Jhansi was fighting as her adopted son was denied succession to throne. Bahadur Shah Zafar had very unwillingly and under pressure, agreed to give his name as leader of the mutiny. Because of the personalized issues, the mutiny could not garner popular support and with the help of pro-British forces, mainly from Punjab, the mutiny was crushed.

After this blow, the British Parliament immediately took over the control from East India Company into its hands. A uniform law was enacted and India was unified for administrative reasons. This is aptly represented by Bhushan and Garfield, '**The British conquest of India at the same time unified a subcontinent that had been a patchwork of large kingdoms and small principalities since the fall of Ashoka's empire and divided this newly unified India along caste, communal, and linguistic fault lines enshrined in British administrative law**'.

### **The First Indian rebellion:**

After the administrative unification of India, the first-ever rebellion to surface was the Namdhari movement started by Satguru Ram Singh. The movement actually started a month before the outbreak of the first armed rebellion of 1857, which indirectly paved the way for a bureaucratically-unified India. This rebellion was not caused by any petty, personal issues. There was no trigger point for this rebellion. Rather, Satguru Ram Singh very well knew the true, opportunistic nature of imperialism. He gathered people around him, provided the rural people an effective leadership and organization. The people that came forward for the movement were not paid any salary, rather the charisma of Satguru Ram Singh was so strong that Namdhari history records show that people donated their lands and property for the cause of independence from British rule. This is also corroborated by British confidential reports. Active propaganda was done throughout the decade of 1860-70. The reports about the movement were published as early as in 1867 in Russian newspapers, who followed the later events related to movement also. This movement had a strong impact in Punjab, whose native princes had whole-heartedly supported the British imperialists a few years back to crush the *Sepoy Mutiny* of 1857. In addition to the Punjab aristocracy, a large portion of 'temple functionaries' were working for the imperial British government. While for most other people, no choice but to accept British domination was left, the aristocracy and priesthood of Punjab willingly and delightfully embraced British domination and left no stone unturned to support imperialism in all illicit ways possible. It was in this 'thoroughly-subjugated' Punjab, with its people stranded in 'deep ignorance, intoxicant addictions, inhuman rituals with no hope of awakening' that Satguru Ram Singh started his movement and converted the former addicts and helpless people to dedicated freedom fighters. The people who had been described earlier by H. James as '**very low in the scale of humanity**' were transformed into rebels, for which the Gazetteer of Ludhiana district described that '**it is not possible for a Kuka to be a loyal subject of the British Government**'. This was expressed in 1904, thirty two years after heavy persecution of Namdhari Sikhs by the British imperialists and fellow countrymen, following

the Malerkotla event of 1872. Regarding the recruitment in British Government, of which the British imperialists had so much to boast about in Punjab, Satguru Ram Singh strictly prohibited Namdhari Sikhs from taking service in the Government. This was reported in translations of letters of correspondence of Satguru Ram Singh with some of his followers, caught by British authorities, where repeatedly the point "Kukas prohibited from taking service under Government" was pointed out.

#### **Working for a multi-factorial cause:**

The Namdhari Sikhs directly challenged the British imperialists and their stooges or workforce, actively engaged in hurting religious sentiments of people. The issue of cow slaughter, while important for traditional reason, was also a key socio-economic issue. Further, it was linked to psychopolitics of the ex-Sikh Empire, whose memories, the British imperialists intended to erase from the popular culture. Indiscriminate cow slaughter and beef sale was authorized by imperial authorities, which got forcibly extended inside city boundaries, in the case of Amritsar in 1871, adjacent to Golden Temple. The imperial administration neither attended to the concerned residents nor did anything to prevent tensions from flaring up. This required an immediate action to restore the psychological identity of people, who were already de-motivated and also to send a clear message to imperial administration. The administration responded by hanging Namdharis in 1871 in Amritsar. This was followed by similar event in Raikot. In 1872, the police of Malerkotla participated in an unjustified act of killing an innocent ox publicly. Outraged by the vulgar display of provocation by the police of Malerkotla principality and with no hope of obtaining justice, a group of Namdhari Sikhs attacked the police station in broad daylight, as an expression of active protest. Similar to the law-defying act of Malerkotla police, the British authorities executed 66 Namdhari Sikhs on 17th and 18th January 1872 (49 were blown in front of cannons on 17th January, which is the highest number of executions by cannons in a single day in entire world). This was done in Malerkotla, which was a native principality and where the British had no right to intervene in the first place. Secondly, the British law did not authorize a Deputy Commissioner of passing a death sentence, that too without a judicial trial. Further, the British authorities exiled Satguru Ram Singh, again a deflection from their law manual. The British agreed in their confidential reports that if a judicial trial is undertaken, Satguru Ram Singh could not be exiled or placed in prison. Hence, no trial was ever undertaken. In this way, both the imperial British brutalities and disregard for their own law were exposed in front of all. Conscious-stricken Britishers wanted that '**The natives of India have a rare spectacle put before them at the present time, and we hope they will attend to it, and give it a voice that will tell in times to come**'. However, it was the ineptitude and narrowness of Punjab princes and people on one hand, and their generally degraded situation on the other, due to which no protest gestures were made and the Calcutta press noted with disappointment that '**not a voice has been raised or a line written...against this whole-sale military execution**'. At a time, when cold war of the nineteenth century (famously referred as 'The Great Game') was going on between Russia and Britain, and Namdhari movement had already gained highlight in international newspapers, even symbolic gestures of protest against the executions, unlawful as per Britain's own rules, would have spring-boarded Indian independence struggle to international level.

#### **The impact that was missed:**

A mere publication of a symbolic painting of Malerkotla executions, painted by Russian artist Vasily Vereshchagin based on hearsay, in the Magazine of Art in 1887 (fifteen years after the actual event), led to a fierce debate in Europe, accusing British imperialists of inhuman atrocities on Indians. Just like the original event, this debate was also successfully downplayed by the British, since the natives of Punjab

were hand-in-hand with the imperial stratagem. One can imagine how international politics would have got engaged, had the people of Punjab given their voice against the unlawful executions in 1872! This was the first big opportunity lost after 1857. The Namdhari movement was in stark contrast to *Sepoy Mutiny* of 1857 as there were no salary disproportion- or caste-based or inheritance-related issues that the Namdhari Sikhs fought for. Like the rest of Punjab and for that matter, India also, they could have easily turned a blind eye to the real issue of cow slaughter. They could have easily used the popularity attained to gain concessions from the British government. But like the Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh, they remained true to their cause and keep fighting for their principles till the end. No wonder, Namdhari Sikhs obtained the status of 'permanent rebels of the British Empire' just like the Sikhs in general was seen as 'permanent rebels of the Mughal Empire' earlier.

### **The Long Lag Phase:**

The golden opportunity of immediate recognition of Indian independence offered by the events of 1872, had they got linked to international politics through even the passive support of people in Punjab, was lost. The Namdhari movement however, continued in spite of strong restrictions and kept inspiring non-Namdhari revolutionaries later on also. The incapacity to materialize on the opportunity created due to general apathy of public to the cause and thought of Indian independence, resulted in a long lag phase of British subjugation, in which the various individuals, parties and organizations sought active co-operation with the British regime. *Ghadr* movement is an exception and owed its origin to an awakening among Indians residing in foreign countries due to their perceived status as enslaved people by the citizens of free nations. This led to a feeling of dishonour amongst them and they were drawn into freedom movement.

### **Appeals by *Ghadr* movement:**

Taking notice of the Western models of democracy and audit of politicians, together with a necessity for self-respect, *Ghadr* party appealed to Indians to realize the nature of the British imperialism, which they had grossly misunderstood. One of the main centers of their activities was Punjab, which earlier had narrowly missed an opportunity to gain control over home-affairs by not being able to raise voice against the British brutalities during persecution of Namdharis following 1872. Sohan Singh Bakhna, a prominent founder member of *Ghadr* movement was highly motivated by the Namdhari sacrifices. The movement started a '*Ghadr*' magazine for propaganda and strongly criticized the various religious organizations that were acting as stooges of the British, but unfortunately had a support base amongst the illiterate and ignorant masses. Some excerpts (taken from the book: *Shaheed Kartar Singh Sarabha* by Ajmer Singh) are provided:

*"The year of 1913, was an eventful year in the history of India. On 12th December 1911, the coronation of George V was celebrated with pomp and show in Delhi. That type of unique Durbar, perhaps was not witnessed even for the Mughal Emperors. On this day, with the Government orders, in every church, temple, Gurudwara, school, college and other public departments, prayers were held for long life of George V and strengthening of the British Empire. In Malwa Khalsa High School, Ludhiana also, recitation of Gurbani (Akhand Path) was followed by Kirtan. Granthi Lachhman Singh of village Khanpur prayed, 'Almighty God! Keep the Emperor close to your feet'.*

*"In those times, worshipping the British Empire and expressing loyalty to it was considered a big virtue. Be it Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, or any others, all used to toil hard to show themselves as the well-wishers of the British Empire".*

*"Khalsa Diwan welcomed the little dacoit (referring to Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab). The leaders of Sikhs expressed gratitude to them (British imperialists). Analyze! Why did the Singhs welcome the torturous imperialist...Those Anjumans, Diwans or Samaaj (referring to the pro-Empire Muslim, Sikh and Hindu organizations), who perform the sin of revering the English, nation should punish them. In reality, other leaders consider English imperialists as bad, but few leaders, for their want of titles and estates, direct the flow towards praise of the imperialists".*

The *Ghadr* movement was crushed by the imperial British Government, majorly because of the treachery by fellow Indians.

#### **Later understanding and opportunities:**

Many movements and philosophies took birth later in the course of freedom movement. There were proponents of extremism, moderation, Gandhian philosophy, etc. The great poet Rabindranath Tagore received knighthood from British in 1915, and so did Mahatma Gandhi, who received the honour of Kaiser-i-Hind in the same year. Thus, there was no active coercion like the one done by Namdhari Sikhs and later by *Ghadr* party. Just like 1872, another golden opportunity arose during World War I, when the British imperialists could have been forced to yield to Indian demand of Independence. But unfortunately, there was no real demand for Independence and the Indian leaders happily offered unconditional support to the British Empire. The statements of some of the prominent leaders of the time is given below:

**Madan Mohan Malviya:** Our future is completely bound with the future of England. If England lost (the war), we will face troubles. I have no hesitation in declaring that I am faithful of British Empire because I love my country.

**Dadabhai Naoroji:** I have no doubt in my mind that every person of India would be inspired by one desire that the public of England is involved in a great struggle for justice, self-dignity, humanity and happiness of mankind. In this, we should render all help possible.

**Lokmanya Tilak:** I cannot believe that, if any race other than the freedom-loving English would have been ruling over us, then our national feeling would have developed to the extent it has done. Hence, it is my strong conviction that in this event (world war), every big-small, rich-poor Indian has the duty to help the English Emperor to the most'.

**Mahatma Gandhi:** India would be nowhere without Englishmen. If the British do not win, to whom shall we go claiming equal partnership? Shall we go to the victorious German or Turk or Afghan for it? The liberty-loving English will surely yield after seeing that we have laid down our lives for them.

#### **The tale of Indian people's suffering:**

The World War I ended in 1918. And with it, ended the experimentation of Indian leaders. The understanding that British imperialists would free India as an expression of gratitude proved to be a complete failure. The imperialists responded with stricter laws and a spectacular display of violence at Jallianwala Bagh in 1919. The infamous incident, whose centenary is being observed this year still awaits an official apology from the British parliament to this day. But the experimentation by Indian leaders cannot be simply termed 'mis-understanding' as it is clear that already voices of distrust for the British imperialism had been raised. But perhaps these were casually ignored by the leadership. This, hence, was not misunderstanding but an 'extremely poor show of diplomacy'. The diplomacy and understanding shown by the Namdhari movement half-a-century earlier, when it tried to reveal the true character of

imperialism in front of common masses, was of much higher standards. The inability to build on the 1872 opportunity points to the 'degraded standards of morality' that was rampant during that time. But the inability to build on the World War opportunity points to 'low standards of diplomacy' amongst the Indian leaders of the time. Meanwhile, the poor diplomacy of Indian leadership in World War I resulted in no benefits at all, for India. In a way, Indian people were fooled. But who fooled them? British Government, Indian leadership or both? The Indians who died fighting for Britain were not honored. The Indian leadership is said to have conveniently forgotten it, as they were left with no other choice. The Indian soldier's position became one of mercenaries and is a direct evidence of the failure and its subsequent cover up by the Indian leadership. By being an important contributor to imperial military, India indirectly contributed to its own subjugation, as well as of many other nations. This was not the fault of Indian army, but of Indian leadership who first pushed Indian soldiers into war and secondly, did not obtain sufficient and trustworthy guarantees of independence and self-respect from Britain in lieu of India's support for her wars. Thus, Indian families continued to suffer in all respects.

### **More opportunities and mistakes!:**

While Namdhari movement created an opportunity for protest and rebellion, World War I created an opportunity naturally, which however, was not capitalized by Indian leadership.

The heinous act of Jallianwala Bagh tragedy created another opportunity. This was turned into Non-cooperation Movement of 1920. *Khilafat* movement also joined hands with Non-cooperation, but as *Khilafat* did not aim for Indian independence (the movement was for freeing the Turkish Caliphate), its inclusion (without an Indian sentiment) into the Non-cooperation movement is said to be a tactical mistake of Mahatma Gandhi. Similarly, the calling off of the movement following the Chaura-Chauri incident, at the time when the movement was at its peak, is said to have sown the seeds of discontent amongst the Muslims fighting for *Khilafat*, who considered the calling off as a measure to sabotage their efforts was thus, another tactical mistake.

Gurudwara Reform movement or Akali movement showed success in raising sentiments against Sikh temple functionaries who had for a long time, worked as votaries of the Empire. The Gurudwara Reform movement got increasing popularity in vernacular press and was hailed as a successful example of civil disobedience. However, it was limited to the cause of Gurudwaras or Sikh temples only. Making this important observation, VW Smith, Superintendent of Police (Political), Punjab, noted, **'There is little in common between the two movements (Akali Movement and the Non-cooperation movement) beyond the hatred of British rule. The elements of permanent unity do not exist and the Akali movement if carried to its logical conclusion must end in disruption and anarchy'**. The same thing happened. After the *Mahants* (incumbent Sikh priests) were removed and in their place, Akali priests placed in Gurudwaras, the movement was concluded. The desire that after Gurudwaras, efforts should be directed to free the country as envisaged by some Indian leaders, was not part of the Akali movement. However, Babbar Akalis continued their struggle against the Empire.

Then, came the much celebrated Dandi March of Mahatma Gandhi to break salt tax. Research scholarship has revealed that Dandi March was a symbolic gesture to actually prevent a larger movement against the British Empire, which the 'enthusiastic youth' of India was pushing Mahatma for. Leiten mentions in his research, "The Home Department informed to the administration in Bombay that it (Dandi march) was advantageous to the Government' and that the only question was 'whether the movement will be discredited gradually or die down without action being taken against them'. Leiten further mentions that

**'Gandhi, however, ultimately could not prevent the nationalist masses from breaking from his restrictive symbolic gestures and from turning the CDM (Civil Disobedience Movement) into a mass movement'.**

Provincial elections were held in eleven provinces of India in 1937. Congress swept eight out of eleven seats.

After this, another opportunity came in the form World War II. Referring to the position of Gandhi who recruited vigorously for the British in the First World War and achieved nothing out of it, in the second World War, Mahatma naturally went in dilemma. Still the British cause was dear to his heart. For Mahatma, as Rashmi-Sudha Puri points out, **"His sympathies morally were entirely with the British. Apart from his nostalgic memories of the years he had spent in England (the thought of possible destruction of the lovely city of London actually made him break-down) he sympathised with the British on an ideological basis also: the world had 'interpreted them to mean that they were fighting for saving democracy...Hence my sympathies for the cause of the Allies"**.

But by now, there was no more need of recruitment drive by Mahatma Gandhi or others. British imperialists found an ally in the form of Muslim League. Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League both supported British for sending soldiers worldwide for second time. India was pushed into Second World War and Congress was not even consulted. Congress was ready to give support to Britain anyway but wanted an honourable role for itself in decisions concerning India and Nehru had been consistently raising independence as a pre-condition, which the British imperialists were not ready to give. Congress responded by resigning from the provincial seats gained in 1937, which is referred to as 'monumental blunder' by Tharoor. The demonstrative politics, lacking any diplomacy, led to handing over of an important leverage that Congress enjoyed due to its electoral success and paved the way for increasingly more popularity of Muslim League.

When every persuasion failed, Mahatma Gandhi launched Quit India movement. In this movement, Shashi Tharoor, critically observing the events of the time, notes, **'Quit India movement became the drumbeat of a national awakening, but all it did was prolong the nation's continued subjugation... The futility of the Quit India movement, which accomplished little but the Congress's own exclusion from national affairs, compounded the original blunder of the Congress in resigning its ministries. It had left the field free for the Muslim League, which emerged from the war immeasurably enhanced in power and prestige. Both the resignations of the Congress ministries in 1939 and the Quit India movement in 1942 turned out to be futile gestures of demonstrative rather than far-sighted politics. They paved the way for the triumph of the Muslim League.'**

Subhash Chandra Bose at this point was left with no other option, but to side with another imperialist nation, Japan in order to force British imperialists out of the country. Though small in numbers, the Indian National Army fought with superior British Indian Army and created a symbolic support for the Indian cause, a feature that was missed following the 1872 event and many after that.

Thus, a history of political mistakes coupled with proposition of impractical ideas together with vested monetary interests of the national bourgeoisie can be clearly seen in the period following World War I. Nevertheless, World War II proved decisive. Britain was weakened economically and a re-assertion over India required large sums of money and a huge amount of trust, which the British imperialists had

hitherto enjoyed due to a multitude of factors, but which in light of the new developments happening in the world, were now not very dependable.

### **The Great Indian village and the Freedom Family:**

India is surprisingly diverse. So is its philosophy, ideas and people. These diverse group of people were subjugated by imperialists of the late British Empire. Different people interacted with the British Empire differently. Some supported them, others opposed. Yet, most of them remained passive. The vast majority thus, can be considered as the inhabitants of a cosmopolitan Indian village. Tharoor describes that "**The Empire, in Hobsbawm's evocative words, was 'so easily won, so narrowly based, so absurdly easily ruled thanks to the devotion of a few and the passivity of the many'**". The 'devotion of a few' has been slightly discussed, while the 'passivity of the many' is not something that carries much importance. However, the 'few devoted' and the 'many that remained passive' are related, since the imperial rule in India was held by a belief system, which was bolstered by religious and socio-political systems that were Indian, which literally propagated the notion of 'benevolence of the Empire', ingraining it so firmly in people's mind that they could not understand the real nature of imperialism on time and by the time, generations of depredation opened their eyes, they could not do much about it. However, during the last years of Empire, an increasingly larger portion got affected and participated.

This article tried to conceptualize the Indian freedom expressions in the form of a family. Who were the founders or parents of this family of freedom fighters? Who guided this family? Who played the part of decision making, and how did it impact the vast number of people who were within the umbrella of this great big Indian family? Prof. Humayun Kabir wrote an article 'Mother of Freedom Movements', wherein he mentions Namdhari movement started by Satguru Ram Singh to be the founder of other freedom movements. Prof. Kabir has failed to comprehend the ground reality and motivation behind the 1871 and 1872 events, yet in general he has summarized the movement correctly as being the first effort for Indian independence. The participants of the Namdhari movement were common people, who were raised to higher standards of morality and understanding by Satguru Ram Singh. These people who were described as 'low in the scale of humanity' rose to become the invincible rebels of the Empire, whose firm faith in their cause actually raises them to a level even above the Indian leadership of later years, which as described earlier, made tactical mistakes and displayed poor diplomacy. Hence, considering the contributions of Satguru Ram Singh to the Namdhari movement, he is the father of the Indian freedom family. Namdhari movement is the mother of this family, which was conceptualized by Satguru Ram Singh before India got united for administrative purpose. All the true nationalists, freedom-fighters who worked for Indian independence without any greed of limelight or other concerns, whether in Namdhari movement, *Ghadar* movement, Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience movement, Indian National Army, other revolutionary movements, etc. are the sons and daughters of this family.

Other Indian leaders occupy the positions as brothers and sisters, who worked in their own ways, according to their own apprehensions and understanding. Some of them worked hoping that cooperation with the intruder imperialists will free them, some worked on the model of active coercion, while a few remained completely confused and impractical. Some of them were actually business persons, exploiting nationalist sentiments of the people for their monetary benefits. This is clearly indicated in the scholarly research, which mentions: "**The developments (concerning Civil Disobedience movement of 1930 and involving the decision of criteria for boycotting of foreign cloth mills, whereby paradoxically majority of British mills like Brady, Killick Nixon, Sassoon were deemed as 'Swadeshi')** show that the *Swadesh Sabha*, led by leading industrialists, and the Congress Boycott Committee, led by S M

**Munshi, were not so much guided by nationalist motives directed against the British imperial power but rather wanted to safeguard the local entrepreneurial interests, including the British ones, against rivalry from England and Japan'.** The common people who actively participated and suffered for the cause of freedom however, represent the true freedom fighters. In fact, it were these common people who pushed Indian leadership to action by its continuous persuasion, which by herself was misguided and marked by poor diplomacy. When second world war broke out, the Indian leadership was again confused and divided. Tharoor notes, '**when Germany's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 led Britain to declare war upon it, Indians noted the irony of the English fighting to defend the sovereignty of a weak country resisting the brute force of foreign conquest—precisely what Indian nationalists were doing against British imperialism. So Britain would fight Germany for doing to Poland what Britain had been doing to India for nearly two hundred years... Despite his stated antipathy for fascism and the Nazis, Nehru saw no reason why Indians should be expected to make sacrifices to preserve British rule over them. How could a subject India be ordered to fight for a free Poland?**'. Even at this conjecture, Mahatma Gandhi, who was experimenting with his ideas, had different notions. Rashmi-Sudha Puri notes in her research, '**Gandhi was sorry to find himself "alone in thinking that whatever support was to be given to the British should be given unconditionally"**'. However, by this time, Congress had decided to distance itself from the impractical ideas of Mahatma Gandhi, who had been advising Jews, Czechs to use non-violence against their aggressors. But Mahatma was still in a different spirit. He wrote in Harijan magazine, '**I am not thinking of India's deliverance. It will come, but what will it be worth if England and France fall or they come out victorious over Germany ruined and humbled?**'. Regarding the understanding of *Swaraj* or freedom, Jawaharlal Nehru noted in his autobiography, '**it was obvious that to most of our leaders, Swaraj meant something much less than independence. Gandhiji was delightfully vague on the subject, and he did not encourage clear thinking about it either**'. This is in contrast to Satguru Ram Singh, whose movement was nothing short of 'complete independence' and was inclusive of every Indian sentiment that revealed itself later. Satguru Ram Singh had in his arsenal, the tactics of non-cooperation and active military coercion also, when needed. The British imperialists were alarmed at the news of enlistment of Namdhari Sikhs in the army of Maharaja Kashmir. A letter to Secretary, Punjab Government in regard of military training of Namdharis commented, '**it is obviously not to the advantage of any Government that a religious leader should possess the opportunity of passing his disciples through the ranks of regiments...**'. A bitter rigidity marked the character of many Indian leaders of twentieth century with regard to the method for attaining independence. Particularly, Mahatma Gandhi was very cynical of the violent aggression and showed no mercy on Indians participating in violent ways, although he was in his own words, a '**self-appointing recruiting sergeant for the British in First World War**'. On the other hand, the revolutionaries using violent ways cooperated with Congress, its young leaders Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose and each wanted to help the other gain leverage over the imperial Government for a free India. Thus, these people were true to the cause of Indian independence, which for them was not a matter of personal gain or experimentation. While the Civil Disobedience movement required people to leave Government jobs, the British imperial policy never itself recruited Namdharis in police and army, as they were sure of the differences of principles propagated by Satguru Ram Singh and those followed by imperialism. In this way, Namdhari Sikhs did not, at any point in history, contribute to the imperial military or administrative machinery. Being the first to appear in timeline, this encouraged later revolutionaries and freedom fighters. This single feature places them at the forefront of freedom fighters and their independence movement a 'true nationalist' one.

Hence, while everybody else played his/her part, some by remaining mute audience, some actively struggling, some offering passive resistance, some experimenting and generating confused ideas with no practicality, the true spirit of freedom fight was shown by Satguru Ram Singh, his followers and followers of other movements who remained steadfast to the cause of Indian Independence. The followers of Namdhari movement did not sway from their principles and were the only people whom imperial administrators considered 'impossible' to tame, others like those of *Ghadr* party and soldiers of Indian Army who later formed *Azad Hind Fauj* (Indian National Army) corrected their course to work for Indian independence, rather than British imperialism. These people constitute the great 'Indian freedom family' who made innumerable sacrifices for the cause of others.

#### **Mark of Maturity:**

Turning to the question posed in the beginning, we can clearly see that Namdhari movement displayed a mark of maturity by working for 'complete independence' since its conception. There was no Western influence at that time. Non-cooperation with the imperial Empire was practiced, yet the movement was not against modernity. Seventy years year after its foundation, the next call for *Poorna Swaraja* or complete independence was given in the Lahore session of Indian National Congress. Like the much forgotten Namdhari movement, the contribution of Namdhari Sikhs under the aegis of Satguru Partap Singh for the successful conductance of the 1929 Lahore session also does not find a note in the annals of history. Similarly, the unique efforts of Satguru Partap Singh for helping the people affected during partition and their rehabilitation have escaped the notice of historians. An unbiased analysis of all the movements of India leave no doubt about the magnanimity of the Namdhari movement. Being the first movement and the one of the few that remained truly 'Indian' till India gained independence, it was an indigenous effort by common people based on Indic philosophy, guided by Satguru Ram Singh. Prof. Humayun Kabir has rightfully referred to Namdhari movement as 'Mother of Freedom Movements'. It is time that historians and historiographers research and highlight the fatherly role that Satguru Ram Singh Ji played for the freedom of the country. As '**Some people can be fooled all the time-- all the people can be fooled part of the time, all the people cannot be fooled all the time**'. This is clearly evident as in spite of the numerous illicit tactics by the British imperialists, their supporters and sympathizers, India is a free country today. Churchill held a firm view that the British Empire would last a thousand years. Brigadier Powell wrote in 1946 that India would need British control of one kind or another for at least fifty more years (Tharoor in: *Inglorious Empire*). That it did not, is a testament to the fact that 'you can not fool all the people all the time'. A look at Namdhari history reveals a peculiar case: '**Some people cannot be fooled for any time**'. That Namdhari Sikhs and others that were theoretically within the 'Namdhari movement' umbrella could not be fooled by the 'concocted aura' of British Empire is a credit to the philosophy of Satguru Ram Singh, an Indic one without the necessity of English or Western ideas!!